

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

April 16, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

The President has asked me to send you this directive.

Henry A. Kissinger

Enclosures

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April 16, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR

SECRETARY OF STATE

The President has asked me to send you this directive. He has also asked me to send the enclosed fact sheet which he dictated following his meeting with Congressional leaders the other day and which reflects his general views on the subject.

Henry A. Kissinger

Enclosures

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

April 15, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

In preparation for your testimony next week I want you to have my thinking on the issues before us. It is absolutely essential that we make clear our resolve to see the current situation in Indochina through to a successful conclusion. Our emphasis must be one of firm determination. Under no circumstances must we show any wavering. We must attack the enemy's invasion and his massive violations of all agreements. I want the following lines to be taken in your Congressional testimony and in other public statements by you and the officials of your Departments.

- With regard to our bombing, our position is that we will cease our attacks on military targets in North Vietnam when North Vietnam stops killing South Vietnamese and Americans and ends its blatant invasion of South Vietnam in violation of all the agreements and understandings entered into by the DRV.
- With regard to negotiations, you should follow these lines:
 1. We and the South Vietnamese made a comprehensive eight point proposal on January 25, 1972.
 2. The other side has refused to discuss any part of it. Instead they engaged in a military build-up.
 3. On March 23 Ambassador Porter said that we would agree to future meetings if the other side indicated a desire for serious talks and would discuss specific topics related to a peaceful settlement. We also expressed a readiness on our part to propose meetings if events made this appear desirable.

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- 2 -

4. On April 1 the U.S. responding to a DRV proposal of March 27, indicated its willingness to resume the talks on April 13. The North Vietnamese responded by a massive invasion of South Vietnam across the DMZ, escalating fighting in Military Region 1, and by attacking in Military Region 3.
5. These attacks have deprived the war of the character of a civil war and have turned it into a massive invasion by the entire North Vietnamese Army.
6. Hanoi cynically asks us to return to the conference table even while they are breaking all existing agreements and understandings. Their actions belie any intent they may profess for serious discussions.
7. In 1968 we stopped the bombing of the North in return for serious negotiations. Since then the negotiations have been a sham. Hanoi has refused even to discuss any U.S. proposal. It is time at long last not just to talk, but to talk seriously.
8. If you are asked about private meetings, you should say that we are prepared to negotiate in any forum that offers a prospect of a business-like negotiation and that the other side understands this very clearly.
9. Our position with respect to negotiations is this:
 - (a) We will not negotiate a surrender.
 - (b) We will not negotiate at the point of a gun.
 - (c) We will negotiate as soon as the other side is ready to put the talks on a business-like basis.
 - (d) As Ambassador Porter said, at the President's instructions, the fact of having meetings is not the same as having negotiations.

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- 3 -

-- With regard to withdrawal, if asked you should say that we will reduce to the announced level by May 1 and that the President will make an announcement before May 1 on his future plans depending on the conditions existing at that time. You should not elaborate.

Please ensure that this approach is rigorously adhered to by all public spokesmen in your Department.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Richard Nixon", is written in dark ink. The signature is fluid and stylized, with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.

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Current Facts Regarding the Situation in South Vietnam

1. The North Vietnamese Objectives:

The North Vietnamese have made clear in their negotiations that their goal is to impose a Communist dominated government on the people of South Vietnam. Having failed to achieve their objectives by political subversion or military infiltration they have now launched a massive conventional invasion of South Vietnam.

a. They have committed 12 of their 13 combat divisions fully equipped with the most advanced weapons systems; armor, artillery and anti-aircraft.

b. They have launched multi-division offensives across the DMZ, across the Cambodian border towards Saigon and across the Laotian border into the highlands.

2. The South Vietnamese Response:

The South Vietnamese are doing all of the ground fighting.

The U.S. role is limited strictly to air and sea power. Those forces will provide whatever support is necessary to meet the following objectives:

a. Protect American forces.

b. Assure no interruption in withdrawal schedule.

c. Provide South Vietnam the chance to defend itself against an invader provided by outside powers with the most sophisticated offensive weaponry.

3. The U.S. Negotiating Position:

The U.S. and South Vietnam proposed a comprehensive 8-point peace proposal made public on January 25; it provides for a settlement fair to both sides; it remains on the table.

Hanoi's current invasion was a response to our painstaking and restrained efforts to enter serious negotiations.

a. Hanoi has shown complete disregard for the 1954 Geneva Accords on Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

- 2 -

b. Hanoi has shown complete disregard for the 1962 Geneva Accords on the neutrality of Laos to which it was signatory.

c. Hanoi consistently failed to honor the provisions of the Geneva Conventions with respect to the treatment of prisoners of war.

d. Hanoi has now flagrantly broken the 1968 understandings which led to the cessation of U.S. bombardment of the DRV.

If the U.S. were to capitulate to Soviet-supported indirect aggression in Vietnam, U.S. credibility and the prospects for preventing direct and indirect aggression in other areas of the world would be damaged irreparably. The U.S. will not capitulate to the North Vietnamese demands or betray South Vietnam at the point of a gun. If the South Vietnamese succeed in repelling this blatant aggression, the prospects for real peace around the world will be greatly enhanced.

4. To Answer the Critics:

There are those who argue that we indeed provoked the invasion. This is a dishonest charge. It has been clear for months that North Vietnam realizing that it had failed to win politically or militarily has planned this invasion in the desperate attempt to crush the South Vietnamese will, inflict massive bloodshed and stir public discontent in the U.S. during an election year.

Those critics are the same politicians who subscribed to the policies of earlier administrations, which sent 500,000 men to Vietnam declaring, "We shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty." These same politicians, Kennedy, Muskie, McGovern and others are today advocating the betrayal of an ally who is fighting effectively and bravely. They advocate surrender to invasion and the binding over of 17 million free people to Communist oppression and retribution. They who sent 500,000 Americans to Vietnam are doing the nation a grave disservice in directly sabotaging the efforts of a President who has withdrawn the 500,000 Americans giving the South Vietnamese a chance to survive with freedom.